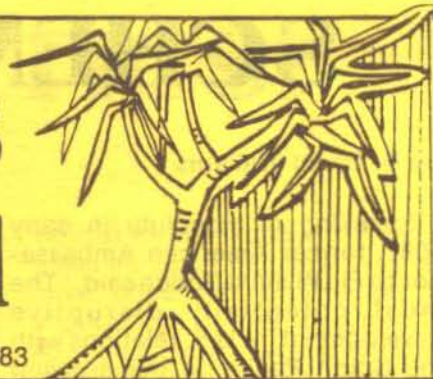


Pandanus Periodical

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Self-Determination is an Inalienable Right of a People

by Ralph Wari

For over four centuries Pacific peoples have been subjected to outside influence and domination. The islanders have become subservient to these outside forces. Much destruction has taken place as a result of this outside contact. Our aboriginal races have almost become extinct in some islands, and indeed, one group of Aborigines became extinct. Land was seized by unscrupulous means and the worst, by far, has been the impact on our traditional political, social and economic systems which have for a long time been suppressed. We must once again assert our right to become masters of our destinies.

This is the independence we want. The independence that is our birth right as individual human beings. We must be free to determine our political future through our elected representatives. Political independence—that is what we are striving for. This is not to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, but to end colonial dominance which has relegated us to an insignificant second party position in the determination of our way of life. We must be free to stand among nations as equals in the international community. We must no longer accept being subdued by colonial powers. For so long as we are politically dependent on the outside powers, our aspirations, hopes, desires and dreams can never be accomplished.

Political Independence
... not to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, but to end colonial domination which has relegated us to an insignificant second party position in the determination of our way of life.

Some of us are in a position of strength to dictate our terms to foreign governments and multinational corporations that have exploited us for a long time. But we cannot do so if we are still political dependent on them. We cannot and must not depend on the illusion that the outside world is obligated to compensate us for what it has done to us, and what it wants to do with our land, ocean and people. No! We must be free of any kind of false assumptions and relationships that will weaken our position of strength. We must strive for nothing but the best. We must hold our heads high in dignity and pride.

It is said the strength of political power is gold. We know we do not have enough of their type of gold. And let us not make the mistake to use their type of gold to strengthen our political futures, because their



Ralph Wari

gold is a piece of material that is an agent of modern evils which we are already a part of. It is a piece of material that can destroy peoples, nations and indeed itself. Theirs are material gold. We must not trade our inalienable right to self-determination for their material gold.

Our gold is our people of yesterday, today and tomorrow; our gold is our ocean and land. Our strength is the wisdom of our past left to us by our discoverers and makers of our ancient societies. We must become another USA as it broke away from colonial England, so must we break away from colonial powers.

We know we are small. But smallness is our strength. It is an advantage we must not abuse. We must build our modern nations with the guidance of the wisdom of our

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SCHEME OF DREAMERS, C

THE NUCLEAR FREE

By B. David Williams

Speaking in Honolulu in early 1982, former American Ambassador to Fiji William Bodde said, "The most potentially disruptive development for U.S. relations with the South Pacific is the growing anti-nuclear movement in the region...the Nuclear-Free Pacific concept is being put forward by people who either do not understand the full implications of such a policy for American strategic interests, or who do not wish to see the United States maintain a presence in the South Pacific. I am convinced that the United States Government must do everything possible to counter this movement."

Clearly, the overwhelming majority of Pacific Islanders, through their governments, churches, trade unions and other groups, are expressing strong opposition to the substantial and growing nuclear presence in their region, where the human cost of the arms race is ever more strongly felt.



More than 200 nuclear devices have been exploded in the Pacific Islands, by USA, France, and the British. While the U.S. no longer tests weapons there, it continues to test its weapons delivery systems at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. To achieve the highest degree of accuracy, many of these tests involve the use of highly radioactive materials. Kwajalein is now also a part of the U.S. anti-satellite network.

The catastrophic effect of the testing in the Marshall Islands is increasingly well-known: the utter destruction of several islands;

severe radioactive fallout contamination on at least ten atolls; radical social disruption, with documented cases of deception, discrimination and inhumane treatment of the people. Medical problems of a major scale have been caused by ionizing radiation.

French testing is already causing similar problems in French Polynesia, though these problems are harder to document because the French Government is so scrupulous in guarding information. It may not be the radioactivity, however, which arouses Polynesians to some effective form of opposition, but rather the deepening concern over serious and rapid breakdown of traditional economy, culture, and values.

There are probably at least 10,000 nuclear warheads stored or deployed in the Pacific, at various bases, on ships and submarines. More than 250 nuclear powered submarines cruise the world's oceans, with at least half of them in the Pacific. There are many other submarines armed with nuclear weapons. It is expected that at least 13 of the giant Trident submarines will be deployed by 1985. With their intimate knowledge of the ocean and its reefs, Pacific Islanders worry not only about war, but also about accidents.

Having 110 military installations, Hawaii is probably the most nuclearized spot in the Pacific, and being a prime target, is probably one of the most unsafe spots on earth in which to live.

Guam, a U.S. territory, is the base for some of the United States' most important strategic weapons: the B-52 long-range bombers and Polaris and Poseidon submarines.

Interestingly, it was the Japanese plan announced in mid-1980 for the dumping of low-level radioactive waste in the northwest Pacific Ocean which more than any other factor catalyzed a general Pacific Island solidarity on nuclear issues. In angry but peaceful response to the Japanese proposal (prepared in coor-

dination with U.S. interests), groups throughout the Pacific met a traveling Japanese "scientific" delegation to demonstrate their fierce opposition to this plan for the use of their beloved ocean.

The Nuclear Free Pacific Movement is not a well-organized, coordinated phenomenon, but is an informal coalescence of conviction around a shared concern and shared values.

The most important piece in this picture is probably the South Pacific Forum, which is composed of the heads of state of 13 "politically competent" (meaning "more or less independent") Pacific Island countries, including Australia and New Zealand. For the past several years, the Forum has officially denounced nuclear testing and the disposal of radioactive wastes in the Pacific. Many of the Pacific Forum member countries deny access to their waters and ports for nuclear-

We see in the Law of the Sea Treaty some patterns and possibilities for sharing power over resources and regions—away from an obviously misplaced trust in super-powers and power blocks, towards new arrangements supported by a more broad participation and control.

powered and nuclear-weapons-carrying ships and submarines. Understandably, because of Australia's prominence in the Forum, they have not spoken out clearly about military bases, nuclear power, and uranium mining.

Palau, at the western end of the Pacific Island Trust Territory in Micronesia, which is under U.S. administration, is an interesting

OR PRACTICAL POLITICS?

PACIFIC MOVEMENT

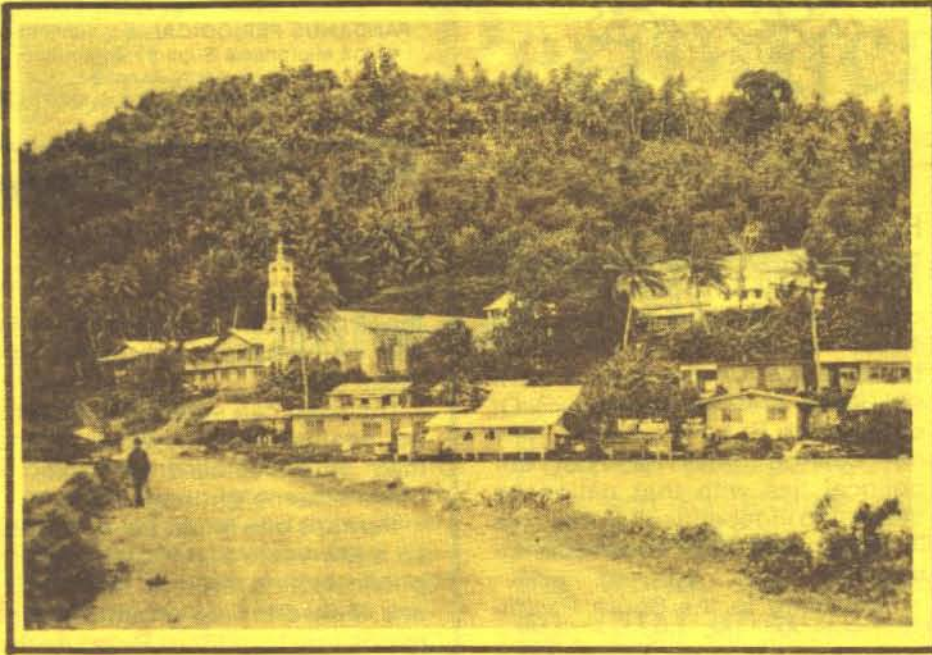


Photo by Skip Polson

example of an emerging anti-nuclear nation. The new constitution of the Republic, to the consternation of U.S. Government officials, forbids the detonation, storage, testing, use or disposal of nuclear materials and chemical weapons in their territory. The yet-unfinished story of U.S. efforts to subvert this constitution makes disturbing reading.

The Marshall Islands is also becoming a focus of interest, with the approaching plebiscite for consideration of a "Compact of Free Association" agreement to govern the relationship of the Republic of the Marshalls with the United States. Hundreds of landowners of Kwajalein Atoll staged a sit-in demonstration at the missile base for 4 months during 1982 to show their strong disagreement with the terms for the use of their islands. While money and the length of time of use were strong elements in their protest, they are also unhappy to see their area used for the testing of weapons systems. It is now reported that even though new terms have been agreed to by the U.S. and the Marshall Islands Government, an increasing number of Marshallese are deter-

mined to defeat the Compact and start a whole new round of negotiations.

The Pacific Conference of Churches, an ecumenical organization of the mainline churches of the Pacific Islands, including The Roman Catholic Church, has been on record for a Nuclear-Free Pacific since 1974. In its 1981 Assembly, the PCC said: "We oppose and condemn the use of the Pacific for the testing, storage and transportation of nuclear weapons and weapons delivery systems; the disposal of radioactive wastes; and the passage of nuclear submarines and ships. We recognize the intimate relationship, not only between the development of nuclear energy and the problem of radioactive waste disposal, but also with nuclear weapons proliferation. We therefore object to further development of nuclear power until the problems of waste and proliferation are convincingly resolved." An active educational program has been undertaken to support this position.

The trade unions have been a pillar of the Nuclear-Free Pacific Movement, not only making statements, but also engaging in

various forms of action. At various times the labor unions in Australia have effectively interrupted the exportation of uranium and the admission of nuclear-powered ships to ports. This year the Fiji Trades Union Congress initiated a coordinating council to bring about more collaboration between the anti-nuclear groups, and organized a boycott against French goods and services to oppose the French testing at Moruroa. The Pacific Trade Union Forum appears to be moving towards stronger forms of action.

Activist groups have mounted various forms of protest. Greenpeace and Pacific Peacemaker have staged impressive sail-ins in the French testing area. The Peace Squadron of New Zealand blocked Auckland Harbor with hundreds of small boats to show their objection to the admission of a nuclear-powered submarine. These are only a few examples—there are many, many more.

Since 1975, Pacific-wide Nuclear-Free Pacific conferences



have been periodically held, bringing together a variety of interests and groups. The last one was held in Honolulu in 1980, and the next one planned for July 1983 in Vanuatu. The Honolulu-based Pacific Concerns Resource Center, which has been servicing the Nuclear-Free Pacific movement with educational resources and organizational support since

Self-Determination

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past. Our political architects must be free of undue influences from outside and build the nations of our desires, hopes and wishes. Our generations of tomorrow must be endowed with nations and societies which they will be proud of an can manage in their unique Pacific way. We dare not let them to be absorbed by the dominant culture of the outside world; for this will make them second class citizens of this planet.

We cannot be ourselves without being politically independent. Nor can we create Pacific nations without being politically independent.

Too many of our people have been schooled by "Briefcase Experts" to reject independence. These Experts tell us that if we become independent we will

Too many of our people have been schooled by "briefcase experts" to reject independence.

become poorer and our economies will decline. Isn't this a way to suppress and dominate us? Aren't these so called "experts" agents of forces that want to keep us under control in order to reap benefits from our resources?

Why do they give us aid? Because they love us? They may, but who gains most from this aid in the long run? Don't they give with the right hand and take it back with their left? We use this aid to buy goods and services from them, don't we? Won't we be in a much better position to bargain with them if we are independent. Yes, because we will deal with them on equal terms and we will not be choked by another power as is the case now with many of us.

For example, we want to make our stance with regard to the International Law of the Sea Treaty and be part of it. We have the right to do so because the sea around us is ours. Why should someone that



has no rights to it prevent us from being a party to the Treaty? Is it right for a nation to prevent us from doing so because it does not subscribe to the Treaty; and because we are dependent on it politically and economically? Of course not. But the situation may not change unless we cut our political ties with that nation by becoming independent. Surely this is what political dependence means.

According to the South Pacific Commission, the Insular Pacific region trade balance from 1975 to 1979 has been negative (two or three countries just break even on some principle commodities). This trend has been increasing. For example, in 1975 the balance was minus A\$480,000 and in 1979 it was minus A\$788,000.

Our political independence may not necessarily improve the situation immediately, because we are economically dependent on the outside world and so will we be for a long time. But political independence can help improve this situation in the long run. We should not allow ourselves to forgo our right to self-determination on the basis of economic reasoning. Though they are related they are two different issues. Our only defense against foreign powers that want to exploit us is independence. It will allow us to choose and pick our firends. It will allow us to feel and do things as Pacific Islanders and without the outside influence that some of us are subject to now.

—Ralph Wari, from Papua New Guinea, is currently completing an MA in Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawaii. He attended the University of PNG and the University of New England in Australia. He was an executive officer for the Third South Pacific Festival of Arts held in PNG in 1980.

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Nuclear Free Pacific

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the Honolulu meeting, functions as the continuation committee for these events.

But what can such small nations do against superpowers? Is the idea of a nuclear-free Pacific a naive scheme of dreamers?

Perhaps one might have thought so a few years ago. But the rise of public feeling around the Pacific and the worldwide groundswell of opposition to militarization and the arms race gives new cause for hope.

We cannot help but see in the Law of the Sea Treaty process some patterns and possibilities for sharing power over resources and regions—away from an obviously misplaced trust in superpowers and power blocks, towards new arrangements supported by a more broad participation and control.

Seen in isolation the Nuclear-Free Pacific Movement, while significant, is limited. But in the context of a global peoples' peace movement, a Nuclear Free Pacific might well be an important piece in the mosaic of practical approaches to Peace.

The Rev. B. David Williams recently returned to the United States after spending 3 years as Director of the Pacific Conference of Churches' Church-in-Society program. While with the PCC in Fiji, he travelled extensively in the region, including two tours of Micronesia.

